

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) *How I Served My Apprenticeship*

Among the millionaires of the late nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie is almost alone in having liked to think of himself as a literary man. He cultivated the company of Mark Twain, Matthew Arnold, and Herbert Spencer. He wrote essays for the *North American Review* and other magazines, and in 1886 he published a book, *Triumphant Democracy*, expounding his economic and political ideas. He also liked celebrating himself and the business ethic he lived by. "Attract attention," he advised young men. So, where many of his contemporaries avoided the public eye, Carnegie liked to show off. It might even be argued that his later beneficences endowing 2507 public libraries, financing the Carnegie Institute of Technology, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace—were not merely done out of his belief that great fortunes should be given away, his "gospel of wealth," but out of his love of attention.

In this piece, he gives his life the kind of legendary status that is so strong in autobiographies addressed to children, while also helping to justify his success to himself. For men may lie when they talk to children, but they prefer not to think they do. They tend rather to be all the more certain of what they have said.

Youth's Companion, where the piece appeared in April, 1896, was also a magazine read by adults, as well as by adults reading to their children. Founded in 1829 by Nathaniel Willis, father of Sara P. (Fanny Fern) Willis, it was bought in 1857 by Daniel Sharp Ford, who, by the 1890's, raised its circulation from 4000 to 500,000. Carnegie took the opportunity to proselytize widely and simply for the glory of capitalism, combating the populist and progressive sentiments that had been rising since the depression of 1893. For him, nostalgia about childhood was not enough. He made his childhood into an economics lesson.

For biography, see Joseph F. Wall, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970; 2d ed., Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), as well as Carnegie's complete *Autobiography* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920).

Reading

Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie
<http://www.freeinfosociety.com/media/pdf/4501.pdf>